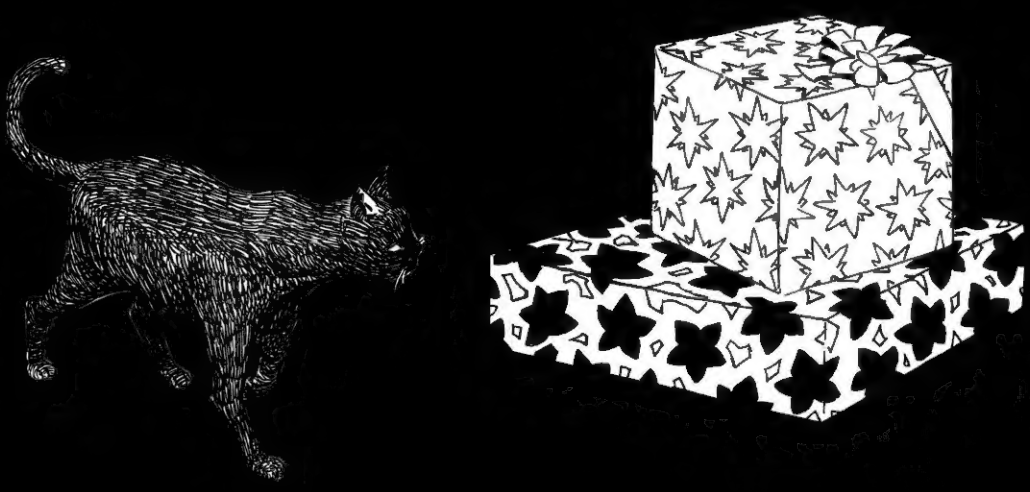
Friday

Ed Brubaker
Marcos Martín
Muntsa Vicente



Chapter Four
The Christmas Present
THE KINGS HILL CHRONICLE
Town Mourns Teen Detective

AFTER LANCELOT JONES'S DEATH, FRIDAY FITZHUGH CRAWLED INTO HER BED AND DIDN'T COME OUT FOR A WEEK.
NOT UNTIL THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.
WHICH IS NOT HOW SHE EXPECTED HERSELF TO REACT.
BUT THE TRUTH WAS, EVEN WITH ALL THE DANGER THEY'D GOTTEN INTO TOGETHER...
FRIDAY NEVER ONCE THOUGHT THERE'D BE A NIGHT LIKE THAT...
WHERE SHE'D FIND HIS DEAD BODY...
ALL CHARRED AND SMALL.

SHE ALWAYS IMAGINED LANCE WOULD LIVE FOREVER, NEVER CHANGING...
ALWAYS SMARTER AND SHARPER THAN ANYONE HE CAME UP AGAINST.
FRIDAY...? YOU AWAKE?

BUT NO.
I BROUGHT YOU SOME DINNER.

...I'M NOT HUNGRY...
YOU NEED TO EAT.

MOM.

I'LL JUST LEAVE IT HERE...

THE GRIEF WAS LIKE A WEIGHT THAT GREW HEAVIER WITH EVERY BREATH SHE TOOK.
SHE SHOULD BE FOLLOWING THE POLICE INVESTIGATION, HELPING THEM...
BUT SHE COULD BARELY MOVE, INSTEAD.
SHE JUST KEPT RELIVING THAT NIGHT, OVER AND OVER...
LIKE SHE HAD SOMEHOW NEVER LEFT IT.

I'M DETECTIVE CROSS, FROM THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE COUNTY OFFICE...
DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HANDLE ANSWERING A FEW QUESTIONS, FRIDAY...?
YES... WHATEVER YOU NEED...

FRIDAY HAD TOLD THE SAME STORY A FEW TIMES...
OF HOW SHE'D FOUND LANCE AND WHAT HAD HAPPENED NEXT...
...HE WAS JUST LYING THERE, ALL BURNED...

AND THEN I SAW SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE WINDOW...

BUT WHEN I TRIED TO CHASE THEM, SOMEONE ELSE HIT ME...
AND YOU DIDN'T SEE EITHER OF THESE PEOPLE... THEIR FACES, I MEAN?
NO... BUT THERE WERE TWO SETS OF FOOTPRINTS...

RUNNING DEEPER INTO THE WOODS...

AFTER AN HOUR, THEY PUT HER IN A POLICE CAR TO TAKE HER HOME...
EMERGENCY
I'M SO SORRY, FRIDAY...
...I KNOW...
AND AS SHE DROVE AWAY, IT FINALLY HIT HER, THAT THIS WAS REALLY HAPPENING.
WHATEVER STRENGTH SHE HAD LEFT JUST CRUMBLED INSIDE HER THEN...
AND SHE DIDN'T KNOW HOW SHE COULD GO ON LIVING, WITH LANCE DEAD.

THEN THE DAYS JUST PASSED, WITH HER BARELY NOTICING THEM.
PEOPLE CAME TO GIVE CONDOLENCES... HER FRIEND *WENDY WEATHERS* FROM TWO HOUSES DOWN...
TELL HER I'M HERE IF SHE NEEDS *ANYTHING.*
FATHER POOLE...
Y'KNOW I SAW HER THAT NIGHT, BEFORE IT HAPPENED...
MISS PETERSON, HER 12TH GRADE TEACHER...
...JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT... THAT POOR GIRL...
AND SO MANY OTHERS.
FRIDAY COULD HEAR HER MOM AND AUNT JODY TALKING TO THEM DOWNSTAIRS...
WE'LL LET HER KNOW YOU DROPPED BY...
SHE'LL REALLY APPRECIATE IT.

BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ANYBODY.
ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T COME DOWN JUST FOR A MINUTE?
I CAN'T, MOM...
I JUST CAN'T...
AT SOME POINT THE DETECTIVE CAME TO ASK SOME MORE QUESTIONS...
SO, I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND LANCELOT HELPED SHERIFF BIXBY WITH LOCAL MYSTERIES?
YEAH... SOMETIMES...
WHICH MEANT THEY HADN'T CAUGHT THEM YET, THE KILLERS.
AT YOUR CLUBHOUSE, I SAW SOME SCIENCE EQUIPMENT IN THERE...?
IT WAS OUR HEADQUARTERS, NOT A CLUBHOUSE.

IT WASN'T UNTIL LATE ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT THAT FRIDAY ACTUALLY LOOKED OUT HER WINDOW...
AND WHEN SHE DID, SHE SUDDENLY FELT EVEN MORE TERRIBLE.
LANCE'S FATHER.
SHE ACTUALLY HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT HIM UNTIL JUST NOW.
HE'D RAISED LANCE MOSTLY BY HIMSELF, AND HE MUST'VE BEEN TORN TO PIECES INSIDE...
BUT THERE HE WAS, MANNING THE LIGHTHOUSE ANYWAY.

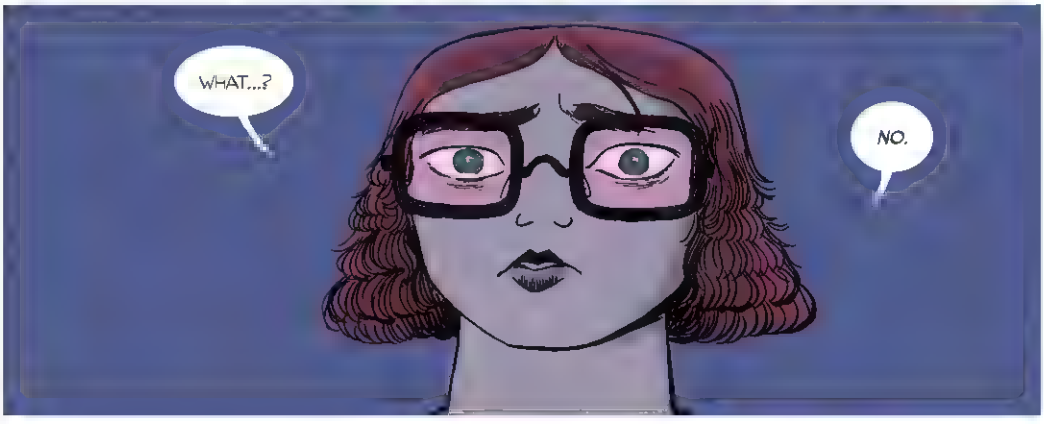
WHAT COULD SHE SAY TO HIM, SHE WONDERED...
NOW THAT HE'D LOST BOTH HIS WIFE AND HIS SON?
WHAT THE FUCK--?
IT'S OKAY... IT'S JUST ME...
DANNY?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?
I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU...

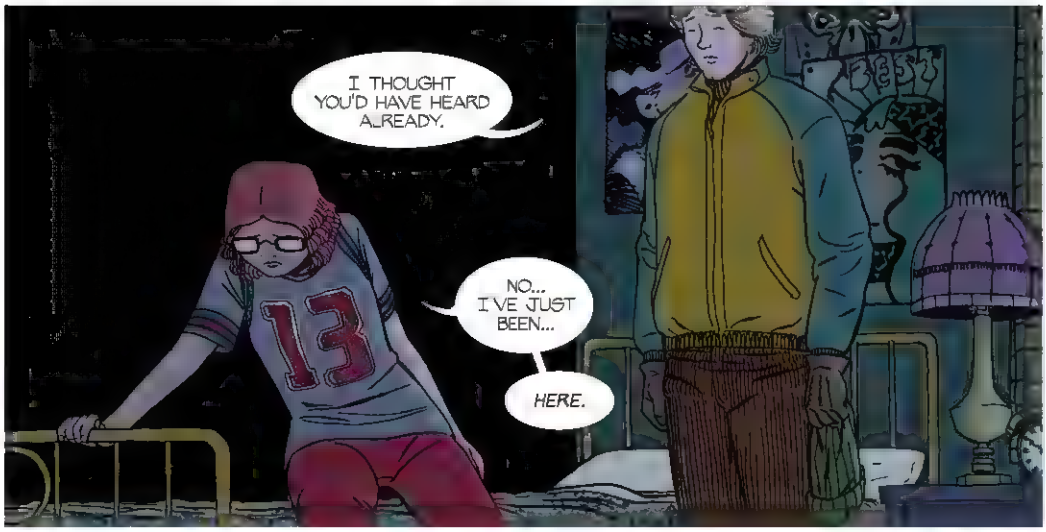
LOOK, I KNOW WE BROKE UP, BUT I HEARD FROM MY DAD --
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN...

YOU'RE GONNA WAKE UP MY PARENTS.

SHIT... SORRY.
SO, WHAT DID YOU HEAR FROM YOUR DAD?

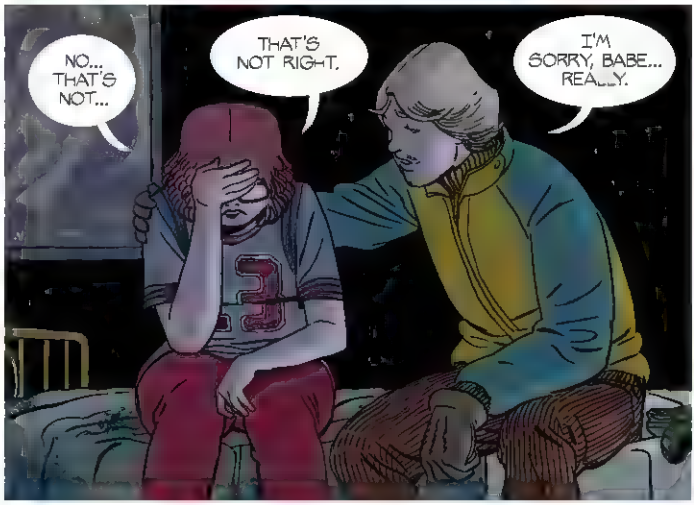
DANNY BUTTONS FATHER WAS ONE OF THE TOWN'S DEPUTIES.
HE SAID LANCE'S DEATH IS BEING RULED AN ACCIDENT.

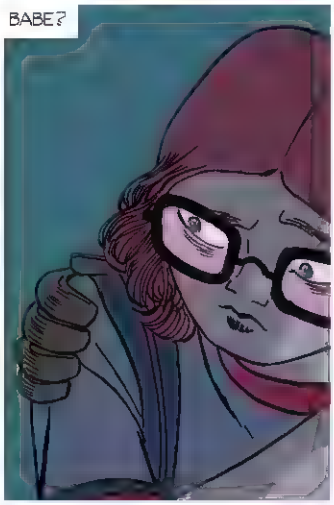

WHAT...?
NO.


I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE HEARD ALREADY.
NO... I'VE JUST BEEN...
HERE.

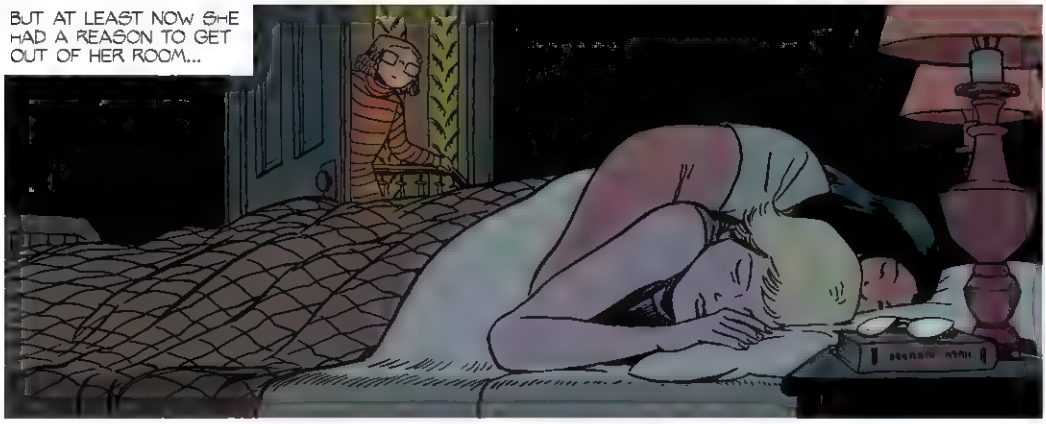
BUT HOW CAN THEY SAY IT WAS AN ACCIDENT?
I DON'T KNOW... HE DIDN'T GIVE ME ANY DETAILS...

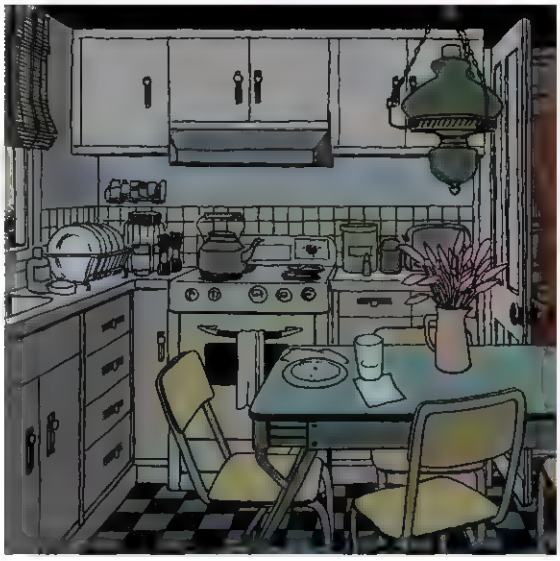
JUST THAT THAT DETECTIVE FROM OUT OF TOWN CLOSED THE CASE TODAY.

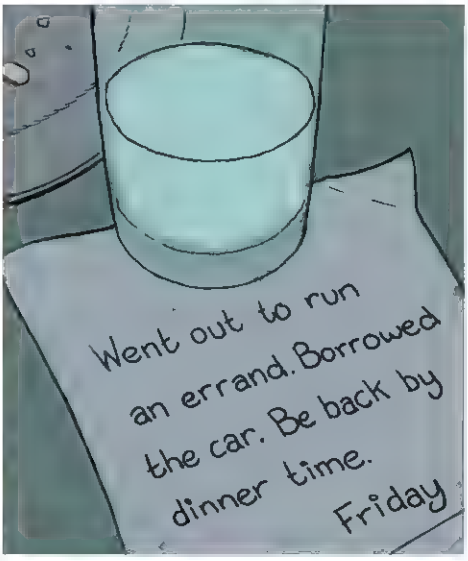

NO... THAT'S NOT...
THAT'S NOT RIGHT.
I'M SORRY, BABE... REALLY.

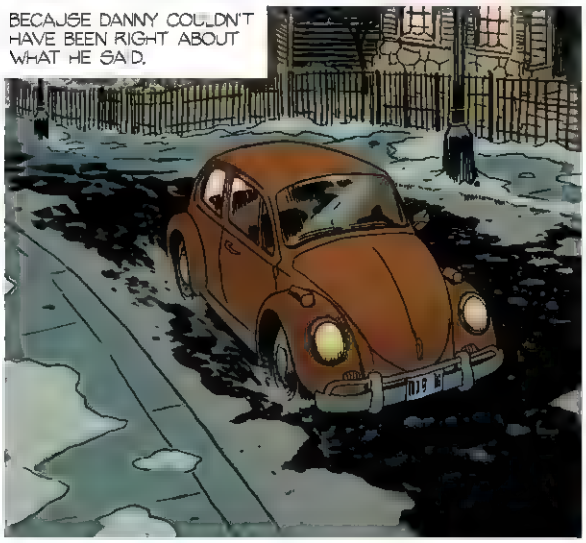

BABE?

OH GOD. DANNY WAS TRYING TO "BE THERE" FOR HER.
NO NO NO. SHE DIDN'T NEED THAT... OR WANT IT.
DANNY, YOU HAVE TO GO NOW... OKAY?
YEAH, SURE...
BUT... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO.
NOT EVEN CLOSE TO IT.

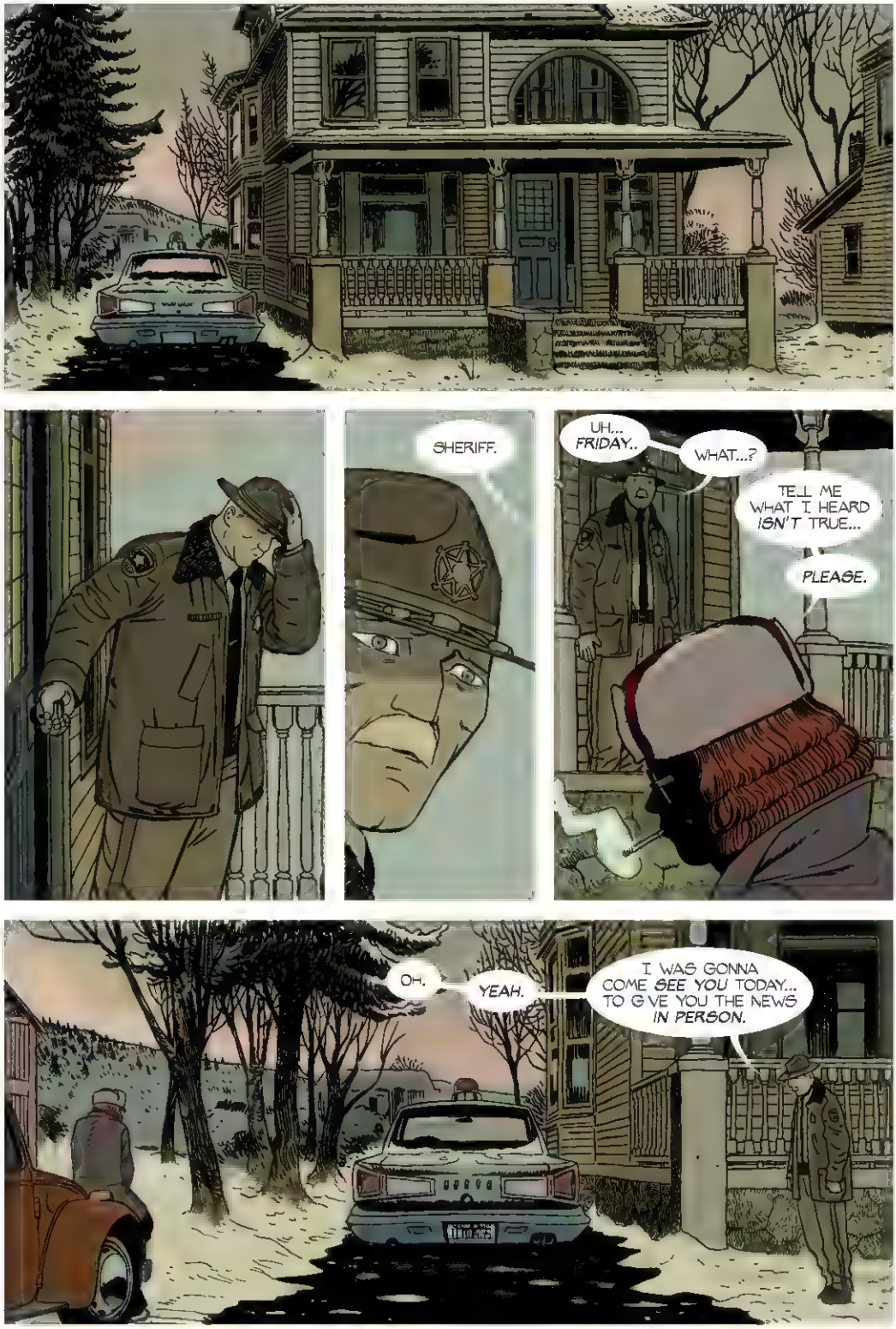

BUT AT LEAST NOW SHE HAD A REASON TO GET OUT OF HER ROOM...




Went out to run an errand. Borrowed the car. Be back by dinner time.
Friday


BECAUSE DANNY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN RIGHT ABOUT WHAT HE SAID.

...NO FUCKING WAY...


SHERIFF.
UH... FRIDAY..
WHAT...?
TELL ME WHAT I HEARD ISN'T TRUE...
PLEASE.
OH.
YEAH.
I WAS GONNA COME SEE YOU TODAY... TO GIVE YOU THE NEWS IN PERSON.

YOU'RE RULING IT AN *ACCIDENT*?
ARE YOU FUCKING *KIDDING* ME?
IT WASN'T WHAT *I* EXPECTED, EITHER...
BUT THAT *COUNTY DETECTIVE* MADE A COMPELLING CASE.

IT LOOKS LIKE LANCE WAS *EXPERIMENTING* WITH SOMETHING...
AND IT BLEW UP...

HE PROBABLY NEVER SAW IT COMING, EVEN.

SO... LET ME GET THIS *STRAIGHT*...

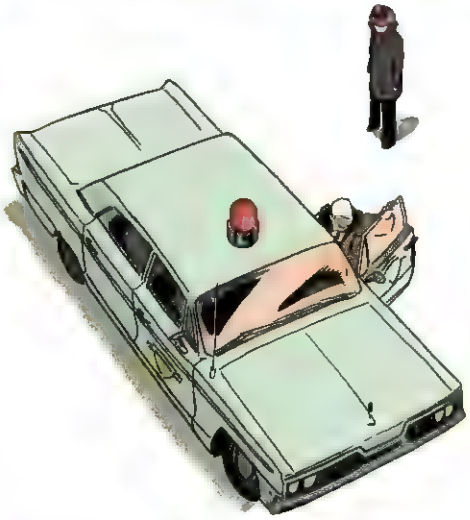
LANCELOT JONES, THE *SMARTEST* KID IN THE WORLD, JUST BLEW HIMSELF UP?

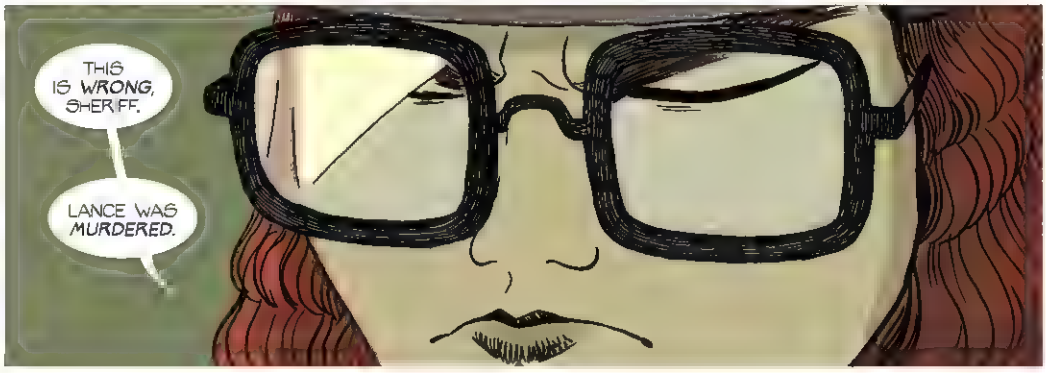
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE.
NO, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE.
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE I SAW OUTSIDE THE TREE HOUSE?
WHAT ABOUT ME BEING ATTACKED?
DETECTIVE CROSS THOUGHT YOU MUST'VE BEEN HIT BY A FALLING BRANCH...
OH, SO NOW I'M JUST SOME CRAZY GIRL WHO GOT HIT ON THE HEAD?
IS THAT WHAT YOU BELIEVE, SHERIFF?
NO... OF COURSE NOT...
BUT I WAS GETTING A LOT OF HEAT ABOUT YOU AN' LANCE 'CONSULTING' WITH ME...
SO I HAD TO LET HER HANDLE THIS.

STILL... ALL THE EVIDENCE *DOES* POINT TO AN ACCIDENT.
I'M *SORRY.*

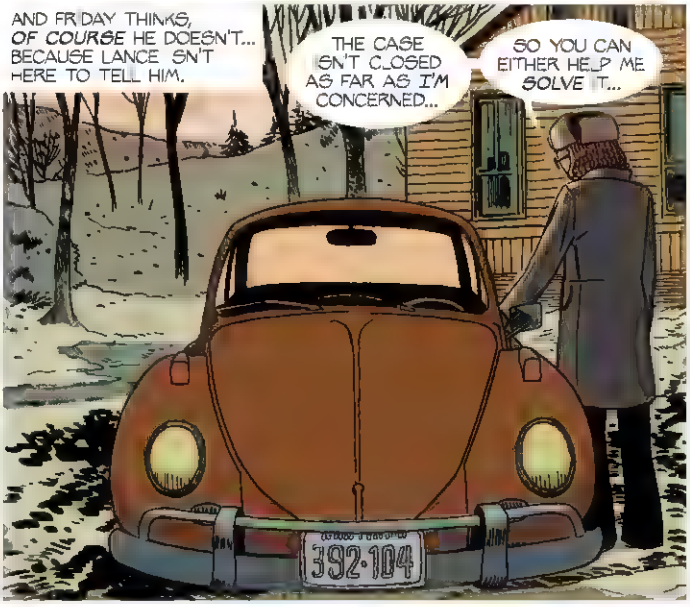
DID YOU EVEN TALK TO *WEASEL WADSWORTH?*
WHEN WE ARRESTED HIM THAT NIGHT, HE WAS A *RAVING* LUNATIC...
HE COULD'VE-
WEASEL'S STILL IN THE *HOSPITAL,* FRIDAY.

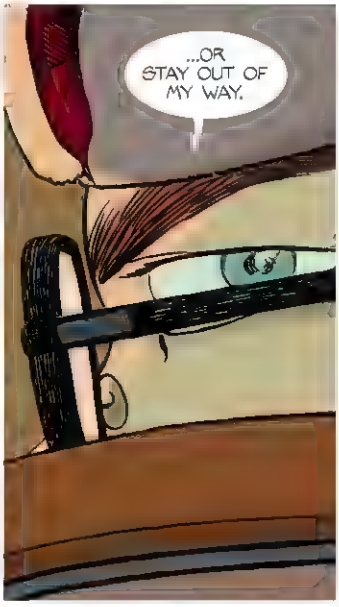
I *WASN'T* HIM.




THIS IS *WRONG,* SHERIFF.
LANCE WAS *MURDERED.*

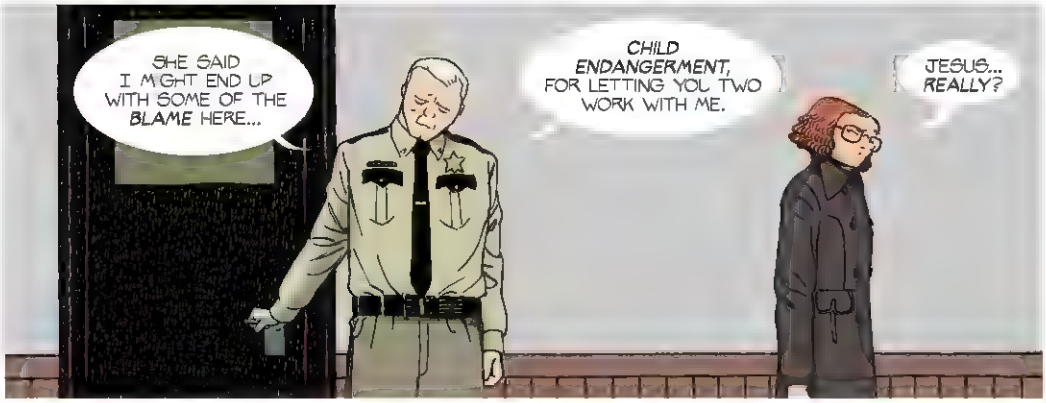
HE WAS WORKING A CASE... HE MUST'VE FOUND SOMETHING...
AND SOMEONE CAME AFTER HIM.
WELL, THE CASE S CLOSED...
SO, I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...

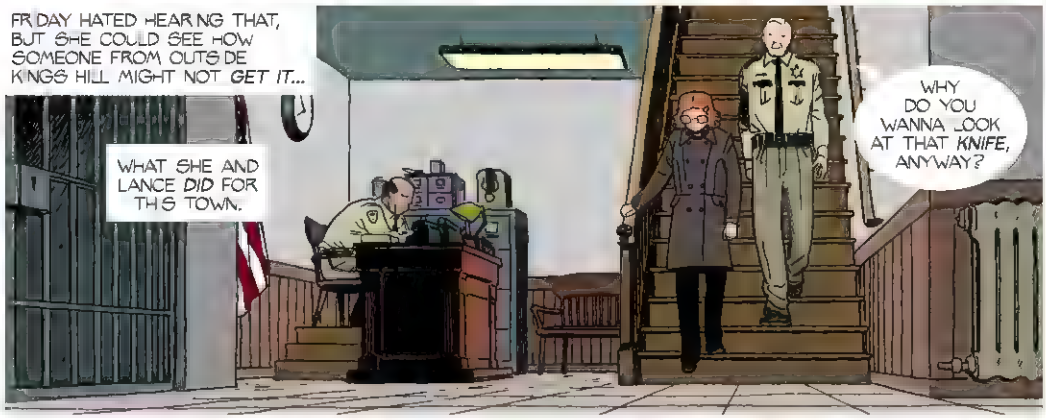

AND FRIDAY THINKS, OF COURSE HE DOESN'T... BECAUSE LANCE SN'T HERE TO TELL HIM.
THE CASE SN'T CLOSED AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED...
SO YOU CAN EITHER HELP ME SOLVE T...
392·104

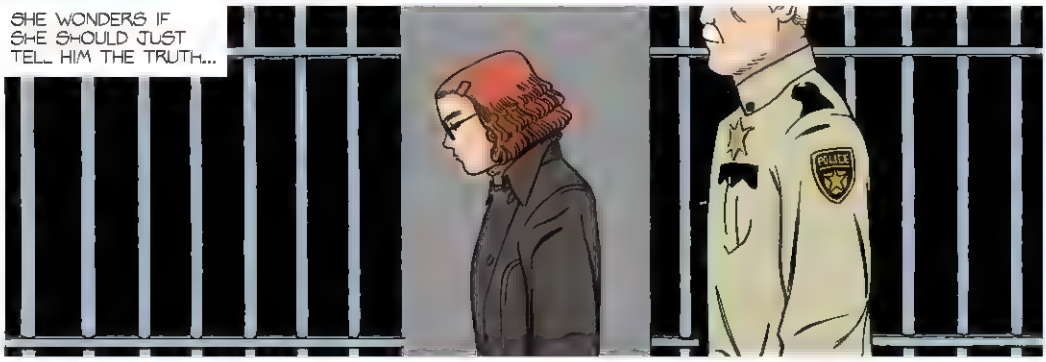

...OR STAY OUT OF MY WAY.

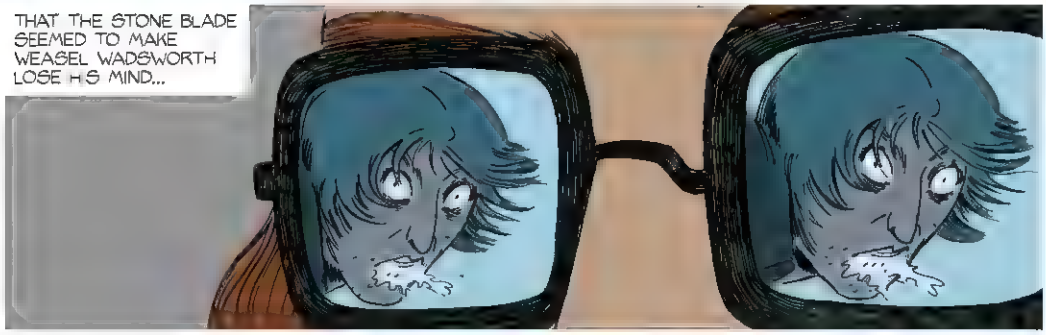
WHICH IS T GONNA BE, SHERIFF?

HEY... WHERE IS IT?
POLICE
WHAT?
THE STONE DAGGER... THE ONE THAT WE TOOK OFF WEASEL?
EVIDENCE STORAGE
OH... THAT'S ON TS WAY BACK TO THAT COLLEGE IN ENGLAND...
THE ONE THAT FINANCED THE DIG WHERE IT WAS FOUND.
SO YOU DON'T HAVE THE FILES FOR LANCE'S CASE...
OR THE EVIDENCE ABOUT WHAT HE WAS WORKING ON?
NO... I TOLD YOU, THAT COUNTY DETECTIVE TOOK IT ALL...
BUT I SHOULD GET HER FINAL REPORT IN A FEW DAYS.
STORAGE

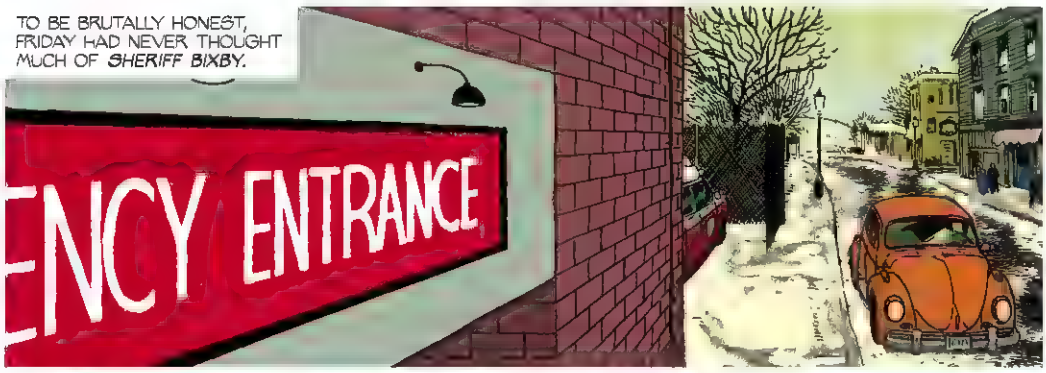

SHE SAID I MIGHT END UP WITH SOME OF THE *BLAME* HERE...
CHILD ENDANGERMENT, FOR LETTING YOU TWO WORK WITH ME.
JESUS... *REALLY?*

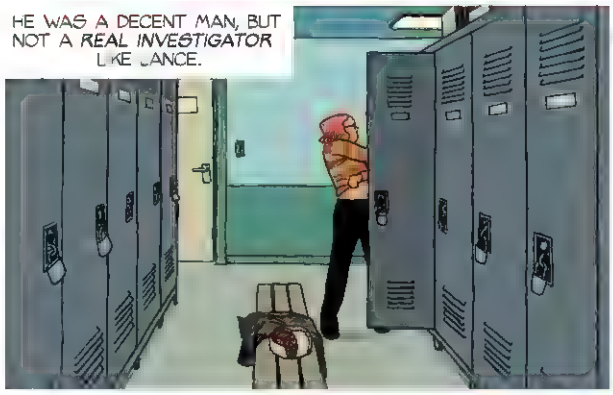

FRIDAY HATED HEARING THAT, BUT SHE COULD SEE HOW SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE KINGS HILL MIGHT NOT *GET IT*...
WHAT SHE AND LANCE *DID* FOR THIS TOWN.
WHY DO YOU WANNA LOOK AT THAT *KNIFE*, ANYWAY?

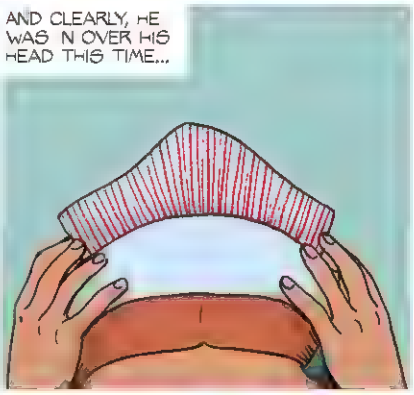

SHE WONDERS IF SHE SHOULD JUST TELL HIM THE TRUTH...
POLICE


THAT THE STONE BLADE SEEMED TO MAKE WEASEL WADSWORTH LOSE HIS MIND...

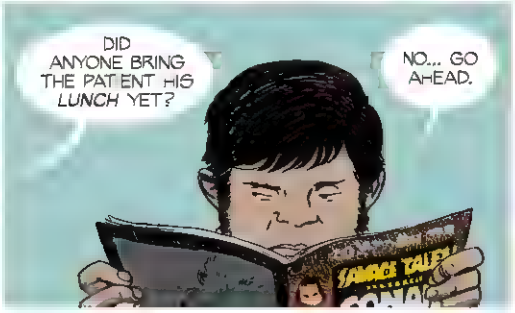
AND LEFT HIM RANTING ABOUT THE *WHITE LADY*, THE OLD WOMAN FRIDAY HAD SEEN IN HER DREAM...
SOMEHOW IT WAS ALL CONNECTED... LANCE'S MURDER, THE DAGGER, THE WHITE LADY...
BUT SHE COULDN'T EXPLAIN HOW.
I JUST... I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO THE CASE.
SO, I GUESS I NEED TO TALK TO *WEASEL*.
HIS FATHER'S *NEVER* GONNA LET *THAT* HAPPEN.
WEASEL'S IN A PRIVATE ROOM... *NO VISITORS*, OUTSIDE OF FAMILY.
THERE'S EVEN A *GUARD* ON THE DOOR.
THAT'S OKAY... I CAN WORK AROUND THAT.


TO BE BRUTALLY HONEST, FRIDAY HAD NEVER THOUGHT MUCH OF *SHERIFF BIXBY.*
ENCY ENTRANCE

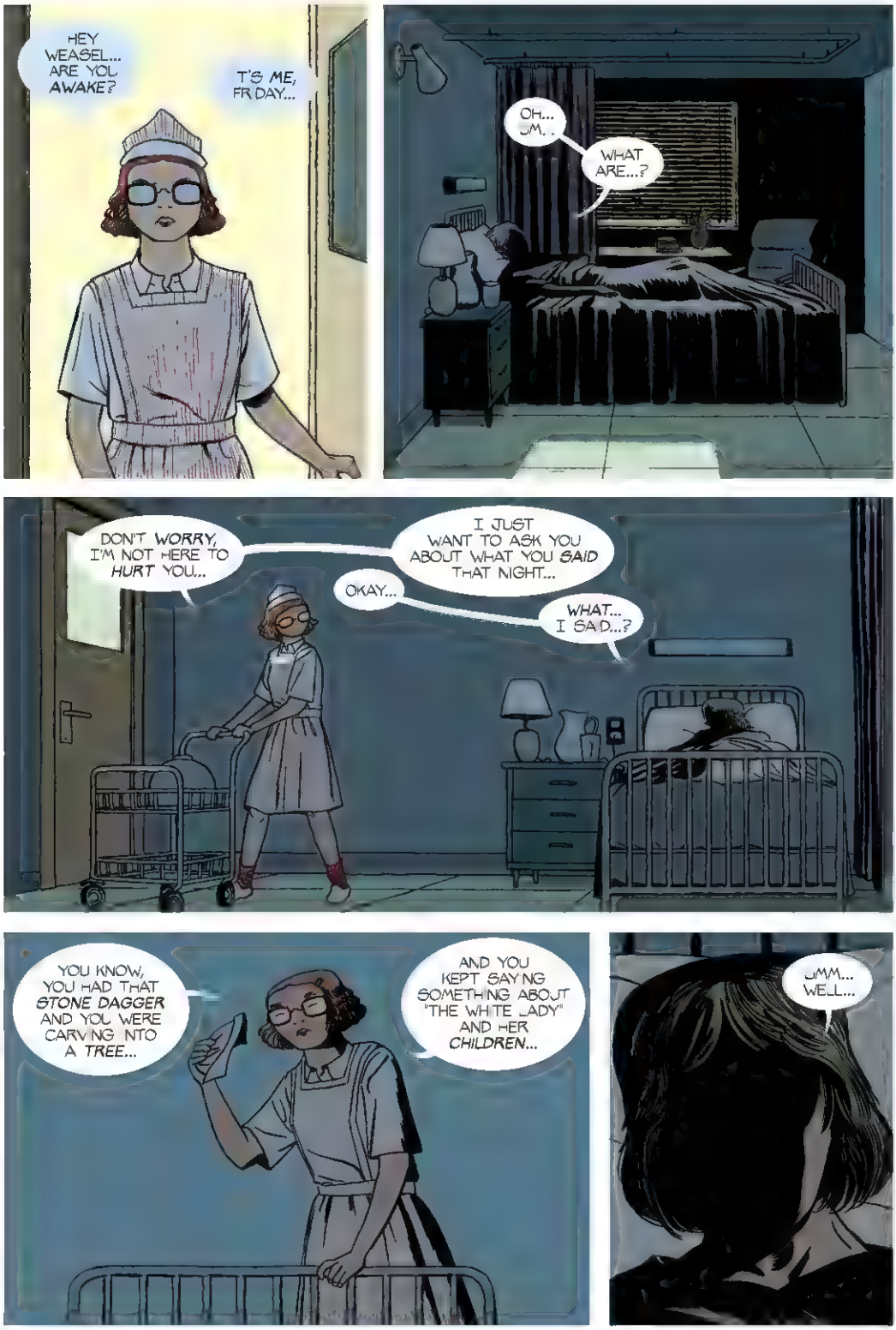

HE WAS A DECENT MAN, BUT NOT A *REAL INVESTIGATOR* LIKE LANCE.


AND CLEARLY, HE WAS N OVER HIS HEAD THIS TIME...

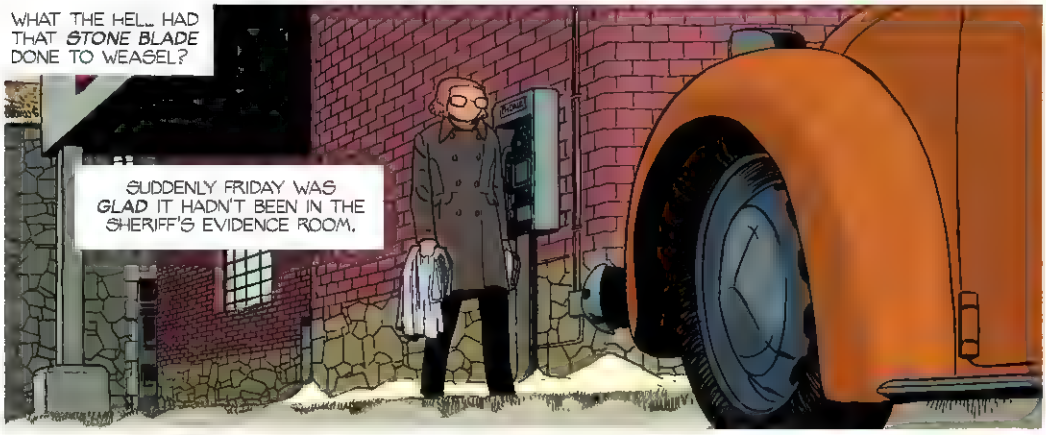
SO EVEN THOUGH HE WAS WILLING TO HELP, FRIDAY KNEW SHE WAS BETTER OFF ON HER OWN FOR NOW...
NOT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THE LAW.

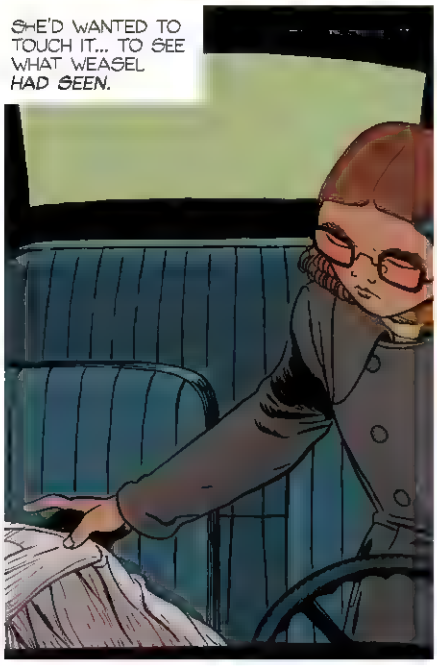

DID ANYONE BRING THE PATIENT HIS *LUNCH* YET?
NO... GO AHEAD.

THANKS.

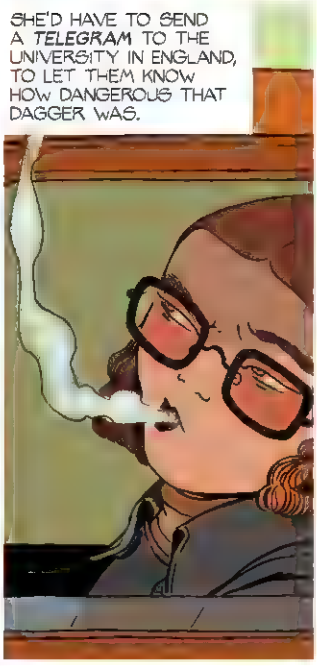

HEY WEASEL... ARE YOU AWAKE?
IT'S ME, FRIDAY...
OH... UM...
WHAT ARE...?
DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT HERE TO HURT YOU...
I JUST WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID THAT NIGHT...
OKAY...
WHAT... I SAID...?
YOU KNOW, YOU HAD THAT STONE DAGGER AND YOU WERE CARVING INTO A TREE...
AND YOU KEPT SAYING SOMETHING ABOUT "THE WHITE LADY" AND HER CHILDREN...
UMM... WELL...

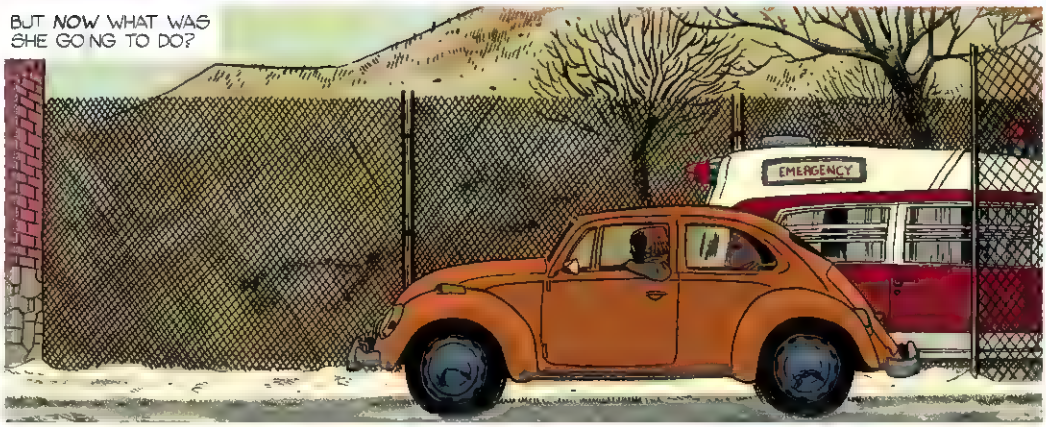
WHO IS SHE, WEASEL... WHO IS THE WHITE LADY?
DID YOU SEE HER?
WAS SHE IN THE FOREST THAT NIGHT, TOO?
LOOK... I... I'M SORRY...
BUT...
DO I KNOW YOU?
BECAUSE... UM... THEY SAY SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH ME...
BUT... ARE WE...
...ARE WE FRIENDS?
OH SHIT.


WHAT THE HEL.. HAD THAT *STONE BLADE* DONE TO WEASEL?
SUDDENLY FRIDAY WAS *GLAD* IT HADN'T BEEN IN THE SHERIFF'S EVIDENCE ROOM.


SHE'D WANTED TO TOUCH IT... TO SEE WHAT WEASEL *HAD SEEN.*

AND THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A TERR BLE M STAKE.


SHE'D HAVE TO SEND A *TELEGRAM* TO THE UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND, TO LET THEM KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THAT DAGGER WAS.

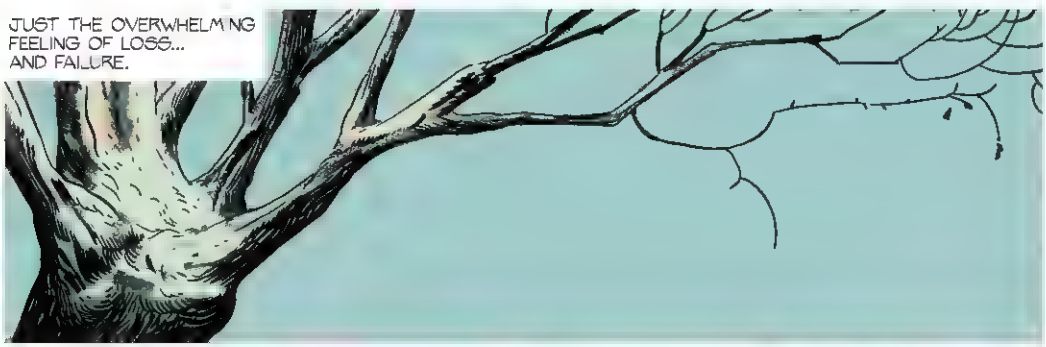

BUT *NOW* WHAT WAS SHE GO NG TO DO?
EMERGENCY

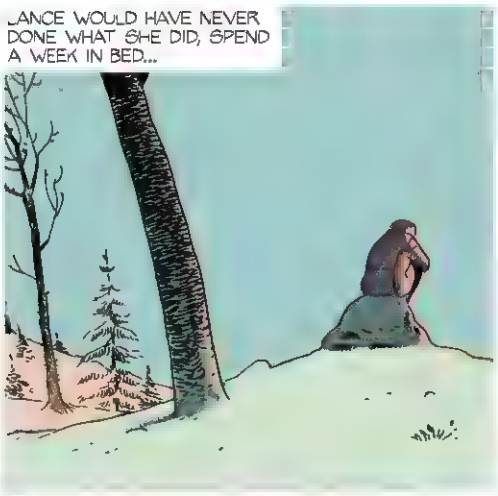
THERE WAS ONLY ONE MOVE LEFT...
RETURNING TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

THE ONLY THING THE SHERIFF *DID* HAVE WAS AN *INVENTORY* OF THE ITEMS *SEIZED* FROM FRIDAY AND LANCE'S HEADQUARTERS...
AND LANCE'S CASE FILE NOTEBOOK *WASN'T* ON THAT LIST.

SO THERE WAS AT LEAST A SMALL CHANCE IT HAD SURVIVED THE FIRE.

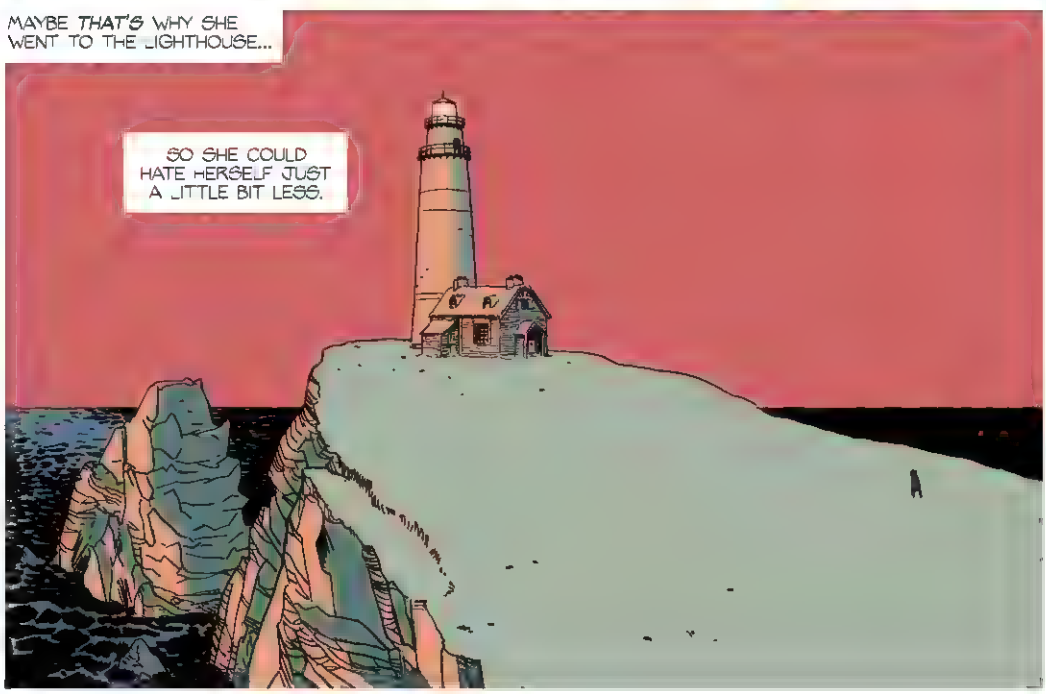
LANCE, OF COURSE, KEPT METICULOUS NOTES...
AND IF SHE COULD JUST GET LUCKY, THIS ONE TIME...
THEN MAYBE SHE COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED...
WHY HE CAME OUT HERE THAT NIGHT...
WHAT *ELSE* HE'D BEEN WORKING ON...
WHILE SHE WAS AWAY AT COLLEGE.
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT HERE.
DAMN IT
FUCK.


JUST THE OVERWHELMING FEELING OF LOSS... AND FAILURE.


LANCE WOULD HAVE NEVER DONE WHAT SHE DID, SPEND A WEEK IN BED...

NO. HE'D HAVE SOLVED HER MURDER WITHIN A DAY, SHE WAS SURE OF IT.

BUT ALL SHE HAD DONE WAS STRIKE OUT ALL DAY... FAIL.
WHAT AM I GONNA DO, LANCE...?


MAYBE THAT'S WHY SHE WENT TO THE LIGHTHOUSE...
SO SHE COULD HATE HERSELF JUST A LITTLE BIT LESS.

FRIDAY...?
HI, MISTER JONES...
I'M SORRY IT'S TAKEN ME SO LONG TO COME SEE YOU.
OH, NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE-
I'M SO SORRY.
I KNOW, FRIDAY...
I KNOW YOU ARE...
I AM, TOO.

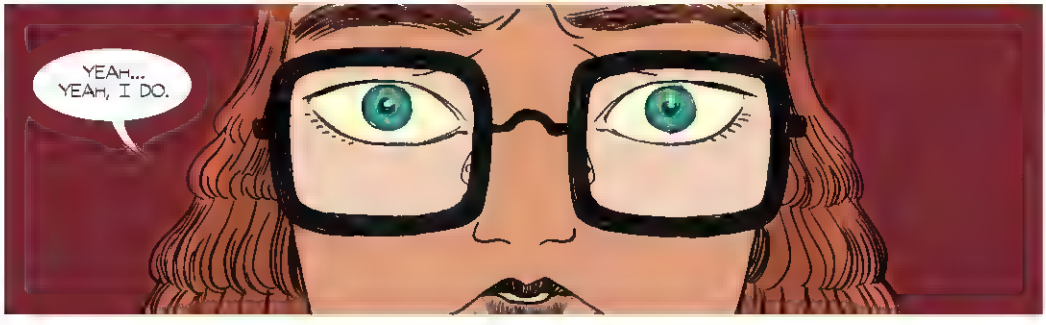
IT DOESN'T MAKE *SENSE*...
HOW CAN HE JUST BE GONE...?
I DON'T KNOW.
I'M HAVING A HARD TIME *BELIEVING IT* MYSELF...
BUT LISTEN... YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE, *ANYTIME*...
YOU'RE FAMILY, TOO... UNDERSTAND?
YES... THANK YOU.
NOW, I HAVE TO GET READY FOR *WORK*...
BUT I *HAVE* SOMETHING FOR YOU.
WHAT?

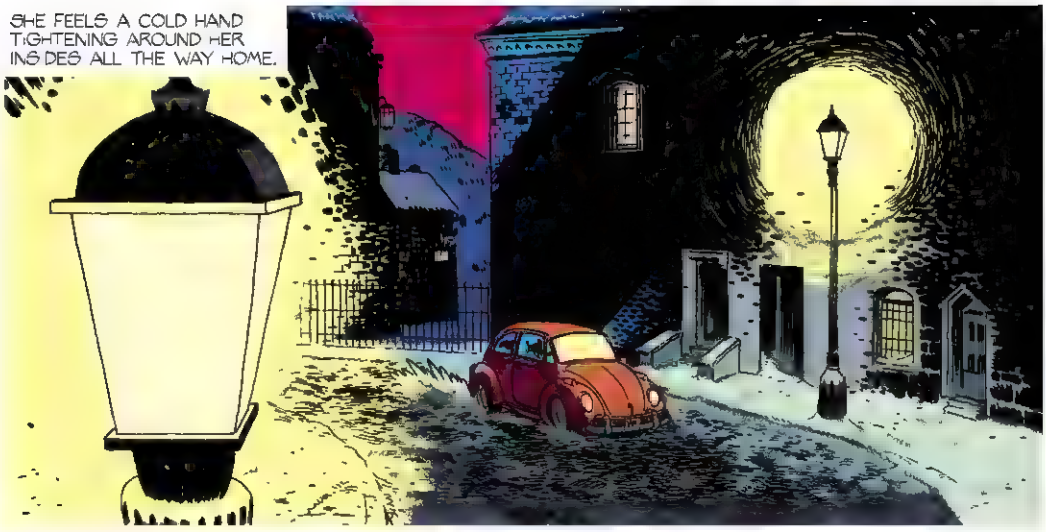
I DIDN'T NOTICE IT UNTIL YESTERDAY...

BUT LANCE MUST'VE PUT THIS UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE.
I'M SURE HE'D STILL WANT YOU TO HAVE IT...

WHATEVER IT IS...
THERE'S A FUNNY NOTE.

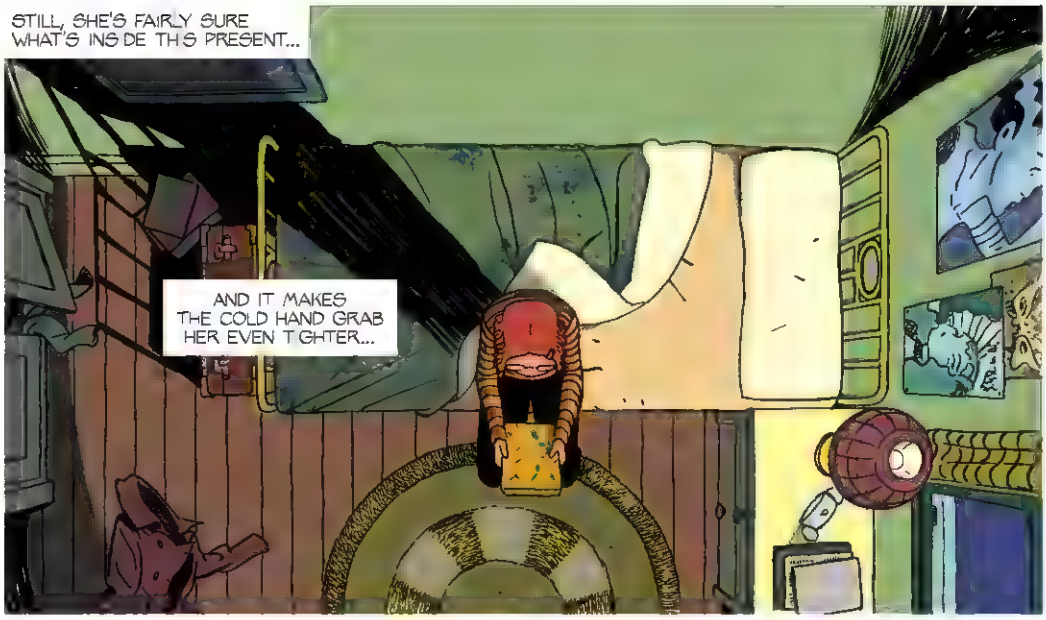
YOU KNOW HOW HE WAS.
For Friday
TOP SECRET!
your eyes only
from
Lance


YEAH... YEAH, I DO.

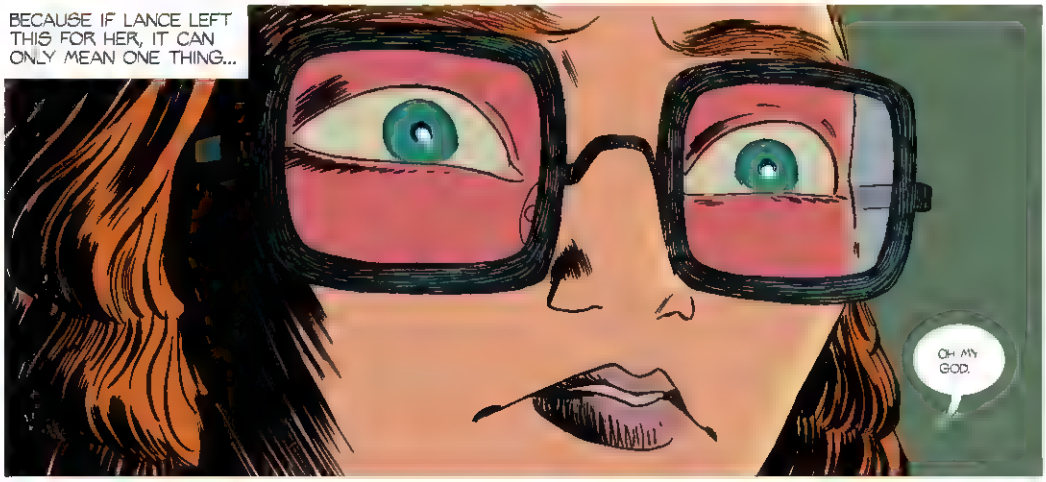

SHE FEELS A COLD HAND TIGHTENING AROUND HER INSIDES ALL THE WAY HOME.

THE PAIN OF GRIEF, TRYING TO HOLLOW HER OUT AGAIN.

HEY, YOU WANT *DINNER*?
NOT RIGHT NOW.


STILL, SHE'S FAIRLY SURE WHAT'S INSIDE THIS PRESENT...
AND IT MAKES THE COLD HAND GRAB HER EVEN TIGHTER...

NOT LETTING GO THIS TIME.


BECAUSE IF LANCE LEFT THIS FOR HER, IT CAN ONLY MEAN ONE THING...
OH MY GOD.

THAT HE *KNEW* HE WAS GOING TO *DIE* THAT NIGHT.
FUCK.
Lancelot Jones
casebook #602
End of Chapter Four

Thank God It's Friday

Okay, we're finally back with the beginning of what I think of as "Act Two" of this first Friday tale. I had a lot of fun writing this one and watching it all come together as Marcos and Muntsa worked on it these past few months. Finally seeing Friday take the lead in this investigation was pure joy. That scene where's she's waiting for the Sheriff, smoking her cigarette, has got to be one of my favorite things I've ever done. It's so noir and young adult at the same time.

Or is it? This recent letter from a reader makes me wonder:

In your notes at the end you tell a wonderful story about a year rediscovering your childhood favorites (**Great Brain**, **Encyclopedia Brown**, **Egypt Game**, Belliars, etc). As a librarian this story warmed my heart. It also annoyed the hell out of me because you referred to these books as YA (young adult). None of the titles you mentioned are considered young adult they are all "middle grade" books ie. books for readers age 10 to 12/13. Young Adult is usually defined as books for teens. Books where romance and often sex or at least thoughts about sex are part of character motivation.

Middle Grade on the other hand more often revolves around platonic friendships, selfdiscovery, etc. As you can see the titles you mention in the Friday notes fall firmly in the MG range as oppose to the YA range. Rest assured you are not the only one to make this mistake the media is full of articles that conflate these two categories.

Read more about the distinction here: https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_2120943

Anyway thanks for reading my rant. I enjoyed Friday very much as I've enjoyed all your work since devouring all the Criminal trades one summer and then working backwards through Gotham Central.

-- Eric Carpenter

Thanks for writing in, Eric. I don't think I knew the term "middle grade" actually. And I'm still unsure about **The Egypt Game**, actually, because it's got a murderer in it, but I think I take your point. Still, it makes me wonder if Daniel Pinkwater's book **Young Adult** is middle grade?

* * *

The first print collection of FRIDAY, collecting Act One (everything that came before this chapter) should be out very soon from Image Comics. I'm still waiting for my copies as I write this, but I'm very excited because it's a slightly different format than most comic trades. The book is a bit smaller, similar in size to the Parker books that Darwyn Cooke did… or to a lot of "Young Adult" or "Middle Grade" books, I guess.

And as you read this, we're hard at work on the next chapter already. The case is heating up, and so is Marcos's workload. Ha.

Anyway, thanks for coming back and spreading the word about FRIDAY. Send any emails to: FridayFitzhugh@gmail.com or send us your messages directly if/when you decide to make a payment, and we'll be back soon-ish.

Ed
October 28th, 2021

www.panelsyndicate.com